



CMS Section 508 Program Tip #10: ARIA Overview

The accessible rich internet application (ARIA) is an excellent coding tool to use in situations where unsemantic HTML needs to be made more accessible. Thus, ARIA may provide a more accessible experience for screen reader and other assistive technology users. While it is advisable to use native HTML 5, instances do arise when ARIA can ease remediation efforts, or simply be used to provide increased context.

ARIA can be used to better define page regions, include context help for form fields (aria describedby), provide labeling for fields (aria labeledby) and can even be used to provide dynamic alerts, progress indication, error handling and table styling. However, developers should not automatically rely on ARIA when developing, but rather, should be contextual with their leveraging of it. For example, if an input field with the label “Description of Problem” is implemented and possesses a character counter, developers should use HTML 5 to programmatically define the label, not ARIA. As the field has a character counter, ARIA should be leveraged to ensure the remaining character count is synthesized by screen readers as the user types.

WHY IS THIS IMPORTANT

ARIA is often the path of least resistance for swiftly mitigating accessibility issues.

MORE INFORMATION

For more information on ARIA and ARIA roles/best practices, please see the [W3C's reference here](#).

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